

**Remarks by U.S. Ambassador Stephen D. Mull**  
**Polish Naval Academy**  
**Thursday, April 11, 2013**

Thank you very much, kontra admirał Dyrz, for that introduction. I want to thank you and admirał Mathea for hosting me today. This is my first visit here, so let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Akademia on its nine decades of dedication to the education of young naval cadets and more recently of civilian students. The education you receive here will prepare you to become decision makers and problem solvers in supporting Poland's and all of NATO's, military preparedness and security. You all have a very important role to play in supporting Poland's increasingly important role in Europe and the world.

I am especially glad to be visiting the home of the Polish Navy here in Gdynia so early in my term as American Ambassador. Americans greatly admire Poland's rich naval history and traditions, which proved Poland's rock-solid reliability in defending its friends and allies with bravery and skill long before NATO existed. No one will ever forget the enormous contribution of the 50 Polish ships that miraculously escaped German capture at the beginning of World War II to go on to be an integral part of our common allied effort against the Axis powers. These Polish ships protected military convoys and defended against German ships in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. They made a major contribution to the coastal defense of Norway and the famous evacuation of British troops from Dunkirk. They blunted German attacks on the Battle of Britain, and most famously of all, the *Błyskawica* saved the town of Cowes on the Isle of Wight from certain destruction with extraordinary bravery and daring. It was a moving experience to board the *Błyskawica* in Gdynia harbor this morning and touch a part of history that was so important to the defense of our

common Western values. It was a powerful reminder that Poland's rock-solid reliability as an ally – which we see every day in our common fight in Afghanistan today – has a long history from even before NATO existed.

In America, we love our Navy. From the very beginning of American independence, the Navy has been an integral part of American power, whether protecting early American shipping from pirates and our newly-won independence from Great Britain in our early history, or more recently freeing the Pacific from Japanese conquest in World War II and guaranteeing freedom of navigation throughout the world today.

In Poland, some ask whether a medium sized country with a relatively smaller coastline with few current security problems needs much of a Navy at all. I am here to argue today that if Poland wants to play an increasingly important role in NATO, in Europe, and throughout the world as it protects its interests – a role that the United States strongly welcomes and supports – the answer is a decisive yes. There are at least seven good reasons why this is so.

First is the importance of the Navy to supporting and defending the diversification of Poland's energy supply and the routes by which that supply arrives in Poland. Poland's heavy reliance on overland import of gas from a single source remains a potential threat to the security of its energy supply. The planned liquid natural gas terminal in Świnoujście will open up major new opportunities to diversify Poland's energy supply and as such will become a major strategic asset for Poland. It should be without question that Poland has a major responsibility to protect not only that asset, but also the shipping routes that will transport liquid natural gas to and from Poland. It is also without question that the most important component of that defense must be Poland's strong and modern navy.

Second is the importance of a strong and modern navy to amplifying Poland's voice and interests in NATO. In January 2011 NATO adopted an Alliance Maritime Strategy that outlines the role that Allied naval forces will play in collective defence, crisis management and maritime security. The strategy specifically called for transformation of NATO's maritime capabilities so that they are more efficient and effective. In only 14 years since formally joining NATO, Poland has emerged as an increasingly important member of the alliance because of its remarkable willingness to share the burden of collective military operations far more than most other members, and to devote a significant portion of its national wealth to defense modernization. To the extent Poland continues in that role with all three of its services, including the Navy in the context of NATO's Maritime Strategy, you will find Poland's voice will grow stronger in setting NATO's strategic priorities in a way that will more effectively protect Poland's strategic interests.

A third reason for Poland to have a strong modern Navy relates to the second, and that is that it will strengthen Poland as a continental player in shaping the future of European security. I doubt it is an accident that the most significant players in European security today – Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain and Turkey – all have in common strong and modern navies that in turn give those nations strong voices in shaping European defense priorities. Poland's share of the European coastline may be relatively small, but a strong Polish navy will increase Poland's value to Europe and in turn strengthen it in all aspects of securing Poland's place and interests in the European experiment.

We have all learned the painful lesson that threats to our common security are no longer those just on our border. In fact, as Europe and America become more secure and interdependent with each other more than at any other time in our entire history, the most

dangerous threats originate much farther away. We learned this lesson painfully in the United States when a group of extremists hiding in caves in Afghanistan masterminded and carried out the September 11 attacks, killing more than three thousand innocent souls, including six Poles. And so the fourth reason it makes sense for Poland to maintain a strong and modern navy is to ensure it has the capacity to respond to these distant threats. Today, sea lanes in the Straits of Hormuz, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Guinea and the East and South China Seas are under constant threat. A strong, multi-national naval presence deters adversaries, ensures the free flow of trade and allows our economies, including Poland, to function. Not only does a strong navy defend a nation's coasts, but it protects that nation's security interests throughout the world, far from national borders. Although the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean or Straits of Hormuz seem far from Poland, any disruption of maritime traffic in any of these regions because of piracy, aggressive territorial claims or war would have an immediate and dramatic impact on the Polish economy through increased energy costs and increased barriers to trade. So Poland has a strategic interest in contributing to international freedom of navigation.

A fifth reason for Poland's navy to be strong, modern and active is that it will enable Poland to gain practical experience in combined operations with its NATO partners. Participation in NATO and coalition out of area operations prepares a navy to do exactly what the Blyskawica and other ships did during WWII defend Poland and its allies from afar or at home. Senior military officers know there is no better training than that afforded by real operations, which are necessary for the strengthening of naval, air and land forces. Poland's Navy today plays a commendable, leading role in the NATO effort to train for the Mine Counter Measure mission, including testing itself in the detection and destruction of World War II mines. Indeed, the Polish Navy earlier this year assumed command of one such mine countermeasures group – SNMCMG-1 - , with the 'Kontradmirał Xawery Czernicki' as its flagship.

This is but a taste of where Poland could be should planned naval modernization occur.

Investment in Poland's navy will not only help protect Poland's strategic interests around the world. It will strengthen Poland's economy right here at home, the sixth reason why Poland's navy is important. About 90 per cent of trade between Europe and the rest of the world is carried by sea, with 400 million passengers traveling through European ports. In Europe today, 1.5 million people find employment in maritime transport and related activities such as shipbuilding, naval architecture, science, engineering, electronics, marine equipment manufacturing, and cargo-handling. A modern Polish Navy will help Poland continue to benefit from its participation in this vital aspect of the European economy. As well, Polish industry will benefit directly from naval transformation as shipbuilding takes place, new technology develops, and industry associated with this endeavor grows.

Finally, as the seventh reason let me mention that a long-term issue everyone is familiar with – climate change – has security implications for all our nations, including Poland. Rising sea levels exacerbated by continuing trends in climate change will mean that naval forces must prepare for new mission requirements due to the opening of international and territorial waters in the Arctic Ocean as the sea ice continues to decrease. Poland perhaps knows this issue better than most, as it is one of only six non-arctic countries that have observer status on the Arctic Council, whose work focuses, in part, on the implications of Arctic climate change.

In undertaking the challenges of developing Poland's naval forces, I want to assure you of continued cooperation with a proud partner on the sea: the United States Navy. The U.S. Navy began cooperation with Poland in international NATO maneuvers and Partnership for Peace

exercises during the mid-90s. Poland still plays a lead role each year planning and supporting BALTOPS, along with many other NATO and regional exercises. The US Navy routinely has officers and sailors working with your navy for joint training and exercise planning. In 2011 the US Navy crew of the Oliver Hazard Perry frigate, USS CARR, worked with the ORP Kosciuszko for an invaluable experience of improving our naval interoperability in a wide variety of situations. And we learned a thing or two from Polish sailors as we observed that Polish Navy SH-2 helicopter pilots were even better than many US Navy SH-60 pilots with their smooth landings on the CARR. In early June 2012 your Navy hosted the US guided missile cruiser, USS Normandy, the US Navy auxiliary-transport ship, USNS Bobo, large US Navy and Marine Corps planning staffs and several other ships participating in BALTOPS. And in the future, we are eagerly looking forward to the deployment of more than 200 U.S. Naval personnel in 2018 when we establish the “Aegis Ashore” missile defense facility in nearby Redzikowo.

Our security and military cooperation extends far beyond military exercises and bases. Your government and Navy recognize the need to continue modernizing ships and equipment to ensure they are seaworthy for sustained operations and capable of dealing with modern threats and complex situations. Your government's modernization plan provides a sound plan for recapitalization of the fleet to allow your navy to deploy with NATO under the guidance and principles of the Alliance Maritime Strategy. The U.S. government warmly welcomes this program and American industry is eager to play an important role in sharing technology and production responsibilities for it.

We fully understand that equipping and operating a navy is costly and complex. But in an age when global trade is the key to future prosperity, naval strength is critical to the interests of democratic nations and the Transatlantic Alliance. As a regional leader in NATO

and the fastest-growing economy in the EU, Poland has a clear role in the future of global naval operations that protect our commercial trade routes and collective security. Modernizing a navy is of course expensive. However, when a nation invests in a navy, its industry is rewarded, and Poland will gain a powerful force able to deter adversaries, protect trade routes and maintain our collective security.

In conclusion, I want to assure you in the strongest possible terms that the United States remains firmly committed to Poland's and Europe's security as integral to our own. Our security alliance with Poland through NATO, although relatively recent, has restored Poland's rightful place in the community of western democracies. And that not only benefits Poland in giving it the best security it has had in hundreds of years; it also benefits the United States as we have witnessed in the brave and costly Polish sacrifices in places like Iraq and Afghanistan over the past ten years. But our friendship and alliance is based on more than security transactions. It results from our strong common values, our ties of blood and friendship, and our solemn commitment to defend each other.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to taking your questions.